How do we get there?

We need to be organised to get socialism because those who run this system are highly organised. The use the state machinery to crack down on workers struggle. They control the media and use it to spread ideas, which divide workers.

However their system is anarchic and even they cannot fully control its workings. Our rulers are like a band of hostile brothers who unite to defend their privileges but who can also turn on each other.

All of this means there will always be struggle against their rule. These struggles manifest themselves in different ways. Most directly, it involves workers fighting for better wages and conditions. But it also involves struggles over bin charges, or resistance to evictions or students looking for decent grants because those who control capital deprive society of valuable resources.

The aim of the Socialist Workers Party is to link these struggles into a challenge to capitalism itself.

In practice this means that the SWP organises:

* In anti-war and anti-capitalist movements

In the recent past, a host of social movements have sprung up to challenge the priorities of the system. Before the attack on Iraq, the Irish Anti-War Movement was able to mobilise over 100,000 people to march against war and has sustained protests ever since. Beyond that there is a wider anti-capitalist movement which meets regularly in events like the European Social Forum and the World Social Forum to discuss its priorities. One of the main themes is to 'Think Globally, Act Locally' so it seeks to draw links between resistance to privatisation and the wider policies of the IMF and the WTO. The Socialist Workers Party believes in building and expand these movements. We work alongside a host of people who oppose the way the system work but do not necessarily draw socialist conclusions. Through common struggle, we seek to show that there is a real alternative to the system.

* In the Unions

Workers have huge power to bring change but are constantly told there 'is nothing that can be done'. This defeatist message, often unfortunately promoted by some union leaders, has led to a weakening of the unions. One result is that people often work under more stressful conditions, for longer hours and do not get full premium payments for Sunday or weekend work. The Socialist Workers Party is for a return to strong, fighting unions and our members occupy key position as shop stewards or union representatives. We argue for solidarity action between workers and oppose the idea of social partnership as a device to get workers to accept less than what they deserve in a booming economy. We press for the election of all union officials and argue they should be paid no more than the members they represent should.

* In local areas

The SWP organises branches across the country and they take up a host of issues that affect people in their area. This can mean fighting to prevent swimming pools being taken over by private companies - or simply looking for better community facilities. Throughout these struggles we argue that people should rely on themselves, that 'people power' and forging links with organized workers is the key to winning.

* In the Colleges

The SWP is the most active political organisation in many campuses. We hold regular meetings to promote socialist ideas and press for militant action to galvanize students. At all times we stress the need for students to link up with struggles outside the colleges.

STANDING UP AGAINST OPPRESSION

In all of these activities socialists promote the common interests of working people. Capitalism constantly tries to divide and rule, seeking to convince one group that they are superior to others. So Northern Ireland, for example, was supposed to be 'a Protestant state for a Protestant people'.

Socialists oppose all forms of oppression because they divide workers and tie one section of workers to their rulers.

This is why the Socialist Workers Party has been to the fore in organizing marches against racism and in saying that 'refugees are welcome here'. We have campaigned actively for the right to divorce without huge financial penalties, a woman's right to choose, and for the right of gay people to live without discrimination.

In Northern Ireland we argue that there is far more uniting Catholic workers and Protestant workers than dividing them. We seek to persuade Protestants to turn their back on loyalist ideas which promote superiority and for Catholic workers to reject the idea of a 'pan-nationalist alliance'. We fight for a 32 county socialist Ireland that will rise out of a challenge to both Irish states.

HOW WE ORGANISE

The SWP is organised into local branches, which meet regularly. The meetings are practical and pull together activists who want to organise in their area, workplace or college. We also hold regular socialist forums to bring socialist ideas to a larger audience.

Becoming member of the party means joining the fight against exploitation and oppression. It entails taking a few copies of our paper Socialist Worker, participating in the activities of the local branch and paying dues.

The SWP is open to all no matter how tight their time constraints because of family or work.

The main thing is a commitment to advance the cause of socialism in whatever way one can.

Name_____

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_____

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The politics of the Socialist Workers Party

The Socialist Workers Party wants to end the vast inequality of wealth in Ireland and the wider world.

The control of the resources by a tiny few is at the root of a host of other evils, most notably racism and war.

Let us first outline what we seek to change:

Class polarisation in Ireland:

A tiny elite of the super-rich control our country and ensure that the main right wing parties, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats implement policies which favour their interests.

Ireland has one of the lowest rates of tax on profit in the EU and this allows the banks, for example, to pay a lower proportion of tax than most PAYE workers do on their wages.

Most of the richest people - for example Tony O Reilly - designate themselves as 'tax exiles' by claiming to reside outside of Ireland for 183 days a year, so escaping many taxes.

The result is that Ireland has a first world economy - and third world public services. There is simply not enough money invested in health, education, and crèche provision. In effect, the majority subsidise the tiny elite by putting up with inadequate services. We are also increasingly subject to 'user fees' to avail of basic services. Bin charges, hospitals charges, 'registration fees' for universities are all forms of indirect taxes. They are also usually the first step towards privatisation.

In the last decade there has been an enormous transfer of wealth - to those who are already wealthy. The share of national cake going to wages, social welfare and pensions has fallen by approximately 10 percent - while the share going to profits, dividends and rent has risen by 10 percent.

The Socialist Workers Party supports every struggle to reverse this state of affairs.

■ School students fight deportation

Global Divide:

Every morning a national newspaper could run a headline: 'More than 20,000 people perished yesterday of extreme poverty'. The fact that none have ever done this is a testament to their priorities.

This level of suffering is not 'inevitable' and it does not happen just because African countries are 'corrupt' (If corruption by political leaders were the cause of poverty, then Ireland would be experiencing a famine!). Its root cause lies in an economic system that vests control of the resources of the planet in the hands of large corporations.

The Make Poverty History campaign has been launched by Nelson Mandela to dynamise

>>Continued from front page

world opinion into seeking change and we fully support its central themes - cancel the debt; aid programmes with no strings; trade justice. However, we go further.

Currently, just three super-billionaires own more wealth than all of the people of sub-Saharan Africa.

The corporations they control dictate the world's economic priorities - leading to resources being squandered on arms spending or advertising.

Millions die, for example, from curable diseases because the large drug companies spend one third of their resources on advertising and only 11 percent on research.

They try to stop cheaper 'generic drugs' coming on stream as these might reduce their profits.

Ending poverty on a global scale will involve a challenge to this economic tyranny.

Permanent War:

Behind the façade of democracy, the US remains a colonial power in Iraq, seeking to make that country safe for giant firms like Bechtel and Halliburton.

It is singularly failing as it faces a huge insurgency that it cannot crush.

The military and industrial complex that runs America, however, is still determined to spread its empire across the world.

In a recent article, Naomi Klein has shown how the White House has created an Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, headed by former US Ambassador to Ukraine Carlos Pascual.

Its mandate is to draw up elaborate "post-conflict" plans for up to twenty-five countries that are not, as of yet, in conflict.

Under the guise of 're-construction', the aim is to open up poor countries for neo-liberal policies that align them closely with their masters in Washington.

The Socialist Workers Party has played an important role in helping to forge an anti-war movement. Our primary target at the moment is ending the use of Shannon airport by US troops.

Over 150,000 US troop passed through Shannon last year, making it one of the largest transport hubs for the US occupation of Iraq.

The airport has also been used to transport prisoners to Guantanamo Bay and other torture centres, but the corporate media in Ireland ishiding this national scandal.

Nevertheless, we are determined the break the silence and seek to mobilise in opposition.

Racism:

The case of the GAMA construction workers shows how immigrant workers are being mistreated in Ireland.

They were paid less than €3 an hour - even though wages in the construction industry should have been €12. The PD leader Mary Harney personally went to Turkey to invite GAMA to Ireland.

She was told in April 2003 about the under-payment of workers- yet she did nothing to resolve it.

The workers were intimidated into speaking out for a long period by the work permit system.

The permit is only given to the employer - and if workers seek to improve their conditions they can be repatriated.

GAMA is a clear case of how racist treatment of immigrants is used to bolster profits.

But racism also operates in a more general way through successive media campaigns which try to scapegoat asylum seekers.

The stories present asylum seekers as 'spongers' who want to simply use Ireland's social welfare system.

This type of racism deflects anger away from the real spongers in Irish society - the tiny elite whose greed is endless.

The Socialist Workers Party central policy can be summed up as follows: Stop deportations - migrant and Irish workers unite and fight.

How did we get here?

How did all inequality this come about? Why did the elected government not look after the people who put them into office?

To understand what is happening we need to 'join the dots' as the problems we face do not stem from a few bad rulers or simply reflect human nature. Their root cause is a socio-economic system that puts profit before people.

Industrial capitalism is a comparatively recent phenomenon, starting just after 1750 with the Industrial Revolution. Originally, it was based on many small firms competing over prices and more efficient means of production. The most successful capitalist did not squander profits on luxury goods - but rather re-invested a high proportion back into production. This led to a regime of 'accumulation for accumulation sake' where human need took second place to the competitive drive to expand.

Under late capitalism, this dynamic continues - but gets worse. Thousands of people now co-operate across the globe to produce simple goods - but control of the process lies in the hands of a few Boards of Directors of large corporations. These directors are unelected and driven only by the need to 'maximise shareholder value'. The corporations have grown so huge that they now dwarf many countries with General Motors, for example, being bigger than Poland, South Africa or Ireland. In every sector of the economy, there are usually only a handful of large firms which control production and form oligopolies to share out the wealth between them. They grow ever closer to the state and seek to fully subordinate its institutions to their interests.

So the reality is that modern capitalism is run by a business class who operate behind the scenes to make sure policies suit their interests. Recent revelations at the corruption tribunals give some idea of how it works. Top business people in Ireland established a secret Ansbacher account to pay the former Taoiseach Charles Haughey a monthly bribe of £20,000. Haughey in turn looked after their interests by slashing taxes on profits.

Even when brown envelopes are not handed over, money dictates how important decisions are made behind the scenes.

Wealthy business people blackmail governments by claiming that if they do not get a good enough profit they will move their companies elsewhere. They form close networks with the top politicians so that what is seen as good for business is good for the country. The power of money means that democracy is undermined.

Parliaments no longer hold the real power in this society. Most of the decisions which affect our daily lives are made in the boardrooms of big business. Having a socialist in the Dail is important as Joe Higgins has shown but real change will not come just from parliament. Big business can be only successfully challenged when huge numbers of workers take action against its rule.

The Socialist Workers Party always points to the power of workers to bring change from below because our fundamental belief is that socialism be based on self-emancipation. It cannot be handed down from on high - it must be taken by a movement that starts at the bottom.

■ US torture in Iraq

What is socialism?

■ Bolivians confront the police and defeat water sell-off

Socialism means that production is based on human need and is not designed to satisfy the greed of the few. Instead of large factories and offices being run by private individuals whose sole interest is profit, they should be controlled by those who work.

The market should not dictate what is produced but the majority of people should be able to debate and plan what is needed for society as a whole.

Socialism therefore involves a huge extension of democracy. Under capitalism, you get to vote every four years and during elections we are told we have 'a say in running the country". But the next morning when you go past the factory gate or the office door, nothing has changed. The boss is still dictating everything.

The global anti-capitalist movement which sprung to life after the great Seattle protests against the World Trade Organisation in 1999 is not content with this fake political democracy. It wants economic democracy as well.

We should not allow institution like the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO to dictate our lives. We should have say in how our jobs and colleges are organized. We need workers' control of the factories and offices so that the majority of people make democratic decisions about the issues that directly affect them.

When the majority controls production much of the insanity that comes with capitalism can be eliminated. There would be no need for an arms industry or for nuclear power plants, which produce plutonium as a by-product for nuclear power.

The multi-nationals would not be allowed to dictate what we eat by producing genetically modified food. The debts of underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia would be cancelled instead of feeding the greed of the bankers.

Socialism also means co-operation rather than endless competition. Today humanity faces huge problems like the spread of AIDS or climate changes that could threaten the planet itself in the future. Instead of different companies hiding their research in the name of 'commercial secrecy' or fighting each other, socialism means that we pool resources to solve problems.